(ii) Provision of STD facility to all the exchanges by the year 2000.

(iii) Provision of reliable transmission media.

(iv) Induction of modern technologies for providing village public telephones.

(v) Increasing capacity of existing exchanges.

(vi) Replacement of small capacity exchanges by higher capacity switches.

(vii) Replacement of life-expired and obsolete switches by digital switches.

(viii) Overhead alignment in the local areas being replaced by underground cable progressively.

(d) The rural areas in all the States will be benefited by this scheme.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) and (g) Does not arise in view of (e) above.

Upliftment of Rural Artisans

1421. SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the details of schemes formulated/implemented so far for the upliftment of rural artisans;

(b) the additional facilities proposed to be given to them during 1997-98; and

(c) the items manufactured under the above schemes during the last two years and the countries to which these were exported?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) This Ministry is implementing a scheme of supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans. Under the Scheme, Rural Artisans living below poverty line are to be given improved tools to enable them to enhance the quality/ quantity/marketability of their products and reduce their drudgery. Initially, it was launched in selected districts. Later, from 1995-96 it was extended to entire country except UTs of Delhi and Chandigarh. Under this scheme, artisan from different crafts except weavers, tailors, needle workers and beedi-workers are provided improved toolkits. The average cost of toolkit is Rs. 2000/- and the unit cost is to be fixed by DRDA concerned. The artisans are required to contribute 10% of the cost of the toolkits as their contribution with the balance 90% being met as subsidy from the Government of India. The use of power driven toolkits upto the cost of Rs. 4500/- has also been permitted under the scheme. Beyond this, it is to be linked to loan under IRDP.

At the district level the DRDA is the nodel agency for implementation. The prototypes of improved tools in pottery, carpentary, black smithy, leather work, wood crafts, metal craft and lacquerware have been developed by the National Small Industries Corporation, Regional Design and Technical Development Centre under the Development Commissioner, Handicraft and other organisations. If the State Government feel that better alternative to improved tools suitable to local conditions are avilable in their States, they are free to chose those models, subject to the approval by the State Level/District level/Task Force/Technical Committee set up for the purpose.

(b) The following additional facilities are proposed to be given to the rural artisans during the year 1997-98 :

(i) Institutional arrangements for establishing marketing linkage for ensuring higher income to rural artisans.

(ii) Supply of literature with graphics and illustrations to the illiterate rural artisans for proper use of improved Toolkits.

(iii) Discussion with rural artisans after supply of toolkits about its utility and suitability.

(c) The rural artisans whom the toolkits are supplied are free to manufacture any item of their choice and they are free to sell their products anywhere they like. Information regarding export of such items to other countries is not available.

[English]

Gas Based Power Generation

1422. SHRI CHITTA BASU : Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the gas-based combined cycle method of power generation is emerging as a preferred route;

(b) if so, whether the Government have since taken this route for power generation; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) to (c) The choice between a conventional thermal power plant and gas based combined cycle power plant depends on a variety of factors including capital cost of various alternatives, availability and price of fuel and site specific environmental conditions etc. Gas based power stations are more environment friendly and have shorter destation period, besides having higher cycle efficiency compared to coal based stations.